



April 20, 2011

Dear County Executive Leggett and County Council Members:

The Water Quality Advisory Group (WQAG) acknowledges that the current budget situation in Montgomery County requires hard choices. But we ask to you recognize that some choices may cause unwelcome consequences and costs in the future. In light of the critical linkage between land use and water quality, we are concerned that proposed cuts to budget for the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NPCPPC) may impair Montgomery County's ability to protect water quality and meet the County's water quality goals.

Montgomery County, along with the rest of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, faces an unprecedented regulatory requirement to comply with Baywide and local Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocations on a tight timetable. If we fail to meet these regulatory deadlines, local jurisdictions could face fines up to \$37,500 per day for violations under the Clean Water Act.

Compliance with this new water quality regulatory framework imposed on local jurisdictions will require new levels of interagency coordination and collaboration, as stated in an explicit component of the TMDL implementation guidance received from the State. As we reported at the February Town Hall Meeting, one of WQAG's ongoing concerns focuses on the level of coordination needed to connect County departments, watershed groups, state and federal agencies, and private citizens in the planning process to best protect water quality.

As the land use-planning agency in the County, the Planning Department plays a key role in interagency coordination and collaboration that will be required to meet and maintain water quality standards as the County grows. WQAG learned that in FY11, the Planning Department sustained a 14.1% cut to its budget, which resulted in the loss of 31 positions – a 20 percent reduction in staff. More recently, it has come to our attention that under the proposed FY12 Budget, the Planning Department will face an additional 12.8% cut, likely to severely undercut its staffing capacity. From WQAG's perspective, these proposed cuts could hinder the County's ability to meet its water quality goals.

WATER QUALITY ADVISORY GROUP

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Montgomery County needs strong interagency coordination now more than ever to meet its water quality goals. Please consider the downstream impacts for water quality that could result from significant cuts to M-NPCPPC as plans for the FY 12 budget moves forward.

Please let us know if we may be of additional assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol Henry".

Carol Henry
Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daphne Pee".

Daphne Pee
Co-Chair

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